CCSD's

DISABILITY INFORMATION SHEET

No. 13
2004

Persons with Disabilities and their Contact with Medical Professionals and Alternative Health Care Providers

In this 13th edition of the CCSD's Disability Information Sheets, we provide statistics on persons with disabilities and their contacts with medical professionals and alternative health care providers. Data for this Information Sheet come from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) conducted by Statistics Canada in 2000-2001.[1]

Contact with medical professionals

- Persons with disabilities were more likely than persons without disabilities to have a regular medical doctor. In 2000/01, 90% of persons with disabilities had a regular physician, compared with 82% of those without disabilities.

- Among persons with disabilities, women were more likely than men to have a regular medical doctor (93% compared with 87%). A similar gender pattern was found among persons without disabilities: 87% of women and 77% of men without disabilities had a regular medical doctor.

- Regardless of disability status, as age increased, so did the percentage of persons who reported having a regular medical doctor, however, the percentages were always higher among persons with disabilities within any age group (see Table 1).

[1] The CCHS contains health-related data on persons aged 12 and older from all provinces and territories, except those living on Indian reserves, Canadian Forces bases, and some remote areas. With a survey response rate of 84.7%, the sample size was 131,535. Data collection began in September 2000 and continued over a 14-month period.

Table 1 **Had a Regular Medical Doctor, by Age Group, 2000/01**

Age Group	Persons with Disabilities	Persons without Disabilities
Under 25 years	81.9%	77.9%
25 to 34 yrs	82.5%	74.2%
35 to 44 yrs	87.7%	80.5%
45 to 54 yrs	91.5%	84.8%
55 to 64 yrs	94.5%	89.2%
Aged 65+ yrs	95.7%	93.0%

Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

Table 2 **Had a Regular Medical Doctor, by Province, 2000/01**

	Persons with Disabilities	Persons without Disabilities
NFLD	90.6%	81.5%
PEI	93.5%	90.9%
NS	95.4%	91.5%
NB	94.8%	92.3%
QC	82.2%	68.9%
ON	94.1%	89.6%
MB	89.1%	78.1%
SASK	91.2%	80.3%
AB	86.3%	76.6%
BC	92.7%	86.2%
YK/NWT/Nuv	58.6%	46.0%

Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

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To be added to or deleted from the mailing list for this series of *Disability Information Sheets*, please contact:

CCSD's Disability Research Information Program
309 Cooper Street, 5th Floor, Ottawa, ON K2P 0G5
Tel: (613) 236-8977; fax: (613) 236-2750
E-mail: drip@ccsd.ca

This *Information Sheet* is also available on the CCSD's website at www.ccsd.ca/drip in both PDF and HTML formats.

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Does where you live matter?

Whether or not an individual has a regular medical doctor varies somewhat by province. Persons with or without disabilities were less likely to have a regular medical doctor if they lived in any of the territories or Quebec. And while persons with disabilities in all provinces/territories were more likely than those without disabilities to have a regular medical doctor, the difference between the two groups was greater in some areas than in others. In fact, the difference was greatest in the territories and Quebec.[2]

There are several possible explanations for these differences. The figures might indicate a shortage of medical doctors in some regions,[3] different attitudes towards seeking medical assistance, demographic differences (particularly with respect to age), or they might indicate difficulties in accessing medical

[2] See the CCSD website at www.ccsd.ca/drip for a table summarizing these statistics by health region. For example, we see somewhat higher rates of persons with disabilities having a regular medical doctor in areas such as the St. John's Region in Newfoundland, Halton Public Health Unit in Ontario, and Oxford Public Health Unit in Ontario, and somewhat lower rates in health regions such as the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, the Lac Saint Jean region in Quebec, and Montreal Centre.

[3] The College of Family Physicians of Canada commissioned a national poll in 2002 to examine issues related to the supply of family physicians in Canada. The poll found that over 80% of Canadians believe there is a shortage of family physicians. While this belief was stronger in rural areas (86%), a large majority of individuals in urban areas (77%) also believe that there is a shortage of family physicians. For further information, see www.cfpc.ca/global/splash/default.asp?s=1

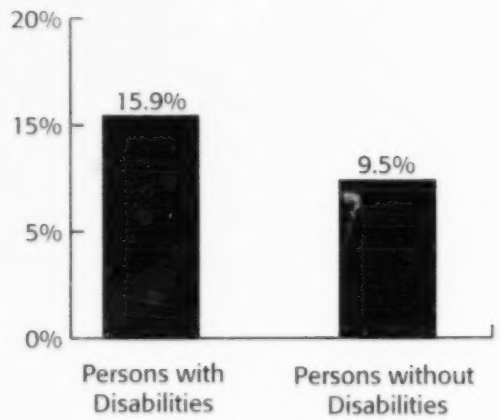
assistance; for example, those in rural areas may have greater challenges getting to regularly scheduled appointments.[4]

Seeking alternative health care

Individuals may seek an alternative health care provider for a variety of services, such as acupuncture, homeopathy or massage therapy. Individuals who have a regular doctor may also seek medical attention from an alternative health care provider.

- Persons with disabilities are about one and a half times more likely to consult an alternative health care provider than are persons without disabilities. In 2000/01, 16% of persons with disabilities contacted an alternative health care provider, compared with 9.5% of persons without disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities may be more open to alternative health care if an underlying medical condition is the cause of their disability and they feel they have exhausted conventional health care approaches. However, only a very small percentage of either persons with (1.6 %) or without (1.4%) disabilities seek only alternative health care providers. Typically, this type of health care is sought *in addition to* conventional methods.
- The majority of those with or without disabilities had a regular medical doctor and did not seek alternative health care (76% and 73.8% respectively).
- Persons without disabilities were more likely to have neither a regular medical doctor nor an alternative health care provider (16.7% compared with 8.1% among those with disabilities).

Figure 3 Consulted an Alternative Health Care Provider in 2000/01

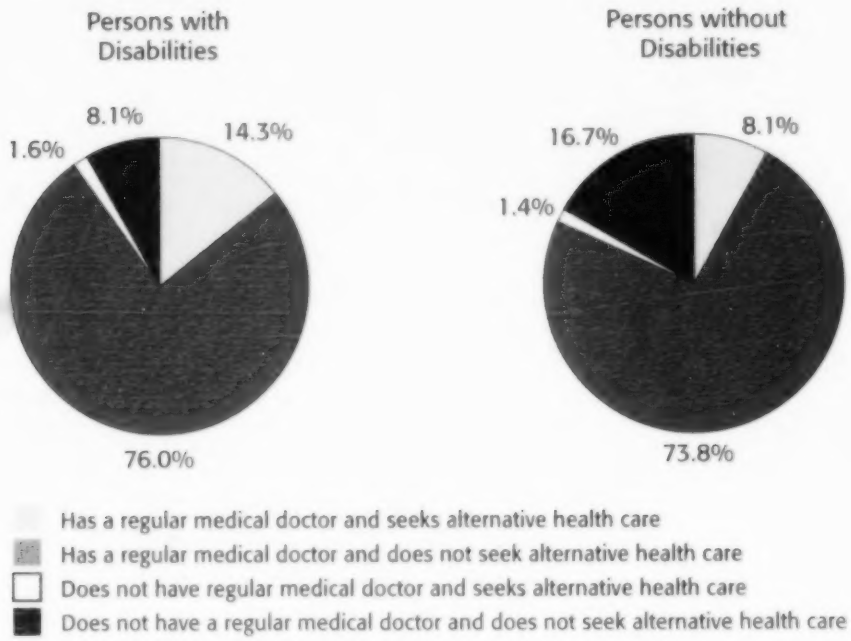


Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

[4] See also: *Fact Sheet: Primary Care for People with Disabilities*, from the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research, Queen's University, and "Access to Primary Health Care Among Persons With Disabilities in Rural Areas" in *The Journal of Rural Health*, Volume 12, No. 1, 1996, pp. 45-53.

- Persons with disabilities were more likely to have both a regular medical doctor and an alternative health care provider (14.3% compared with 8.1% among those without disabilities).

Figures 4 & 5 **Type of Health Care Sought in 2000/01**


Persons with Disabilities
8.1%
14.3%
1.6%
76.0%
Persons without Disabilities
16.7%
8.1%
1.4%
73.8%
Has a regular medical doctor and seeks alternative health care
Has a regular medical doctor and does not seek alternative health care
Does not have regular medical doctor and seeks alternative health care
Does not have a regular medical doctor and does not seek alternative health care

Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

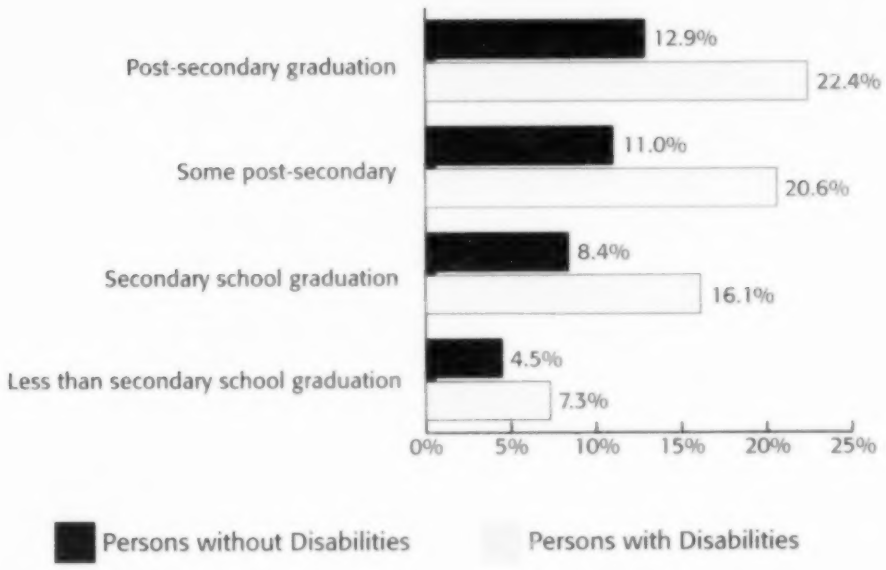
- Women with disabilities were the most likely to seek assistance from an alternative health care provider (19% compared with 12% among women without disabilities; 12% for men with disabilities and 7% for men without).

- The likelihood of using an alternative health care provider increases with level of education, and the pattern is more pronounced among persons with disabilities. Among persons with disabilities, 7% of those with less than a secondary school diploma sought alternative health care,

compared with 22% of their counterparts with a university degree. Among persons without disabilities, 5% of those with less than a secondary school diploma sought alternative health care, compared with 13% of university graduates (see chart below for all categories).

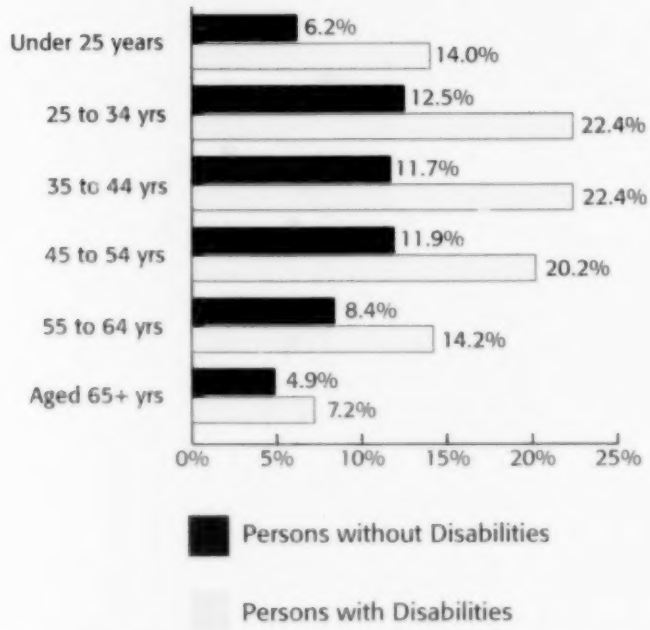
- Age is also a factor in whether individuals seek alternative health care. Young people and older persons are less likely than prime working-age persons (25 to 54 years) to seek such care. The use of alternative health care peaks between the ages of 25 and 54, and again, this relationship is more pronounced among persons with disabilities than it is among those without disabilities. For example, among persons with disabilities, those aged 12 to 24 and people aged 55 to 64 had lower rates of seeking alternative health care (14% and 14.2% respectively), while seniors (aged 65+) had the lowest rates of all (7.2%). The highest rates of seeking alternative health care were among prime working-age persons: 22.4% for those aged 25 to 34 and those aged 35 to 44, and 20.2% among those aged 45 to 54.

Figure 6 **Contact with Alternative Health Care Provider, by Education Level, 2000/01**



Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

Figure 7 **Contact with Alternative Health Care Provider, by Age Group, 2000/01**

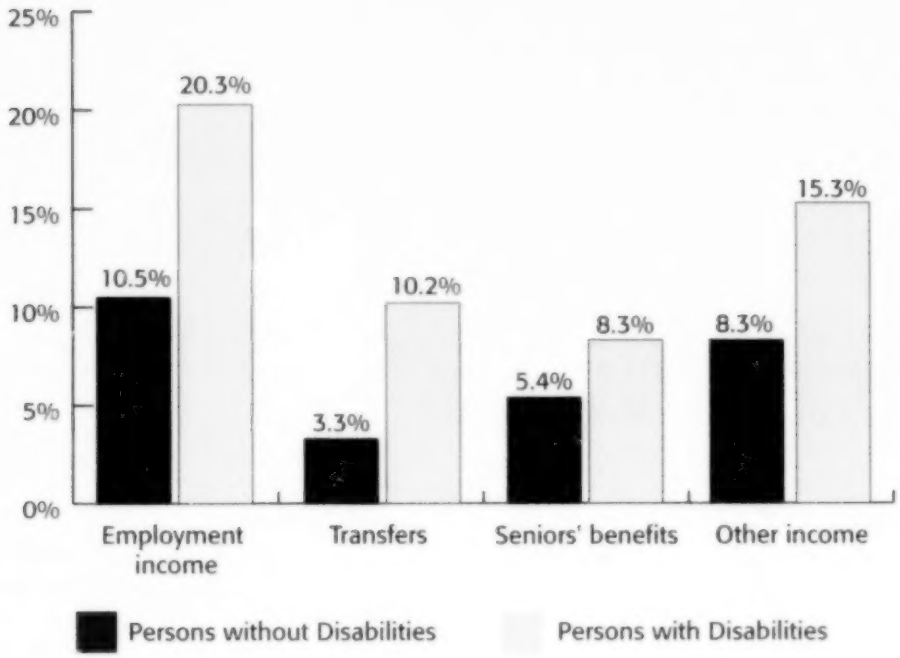


Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

- Older individuals may be less open to the idea of trying alternative health care, or perhaps they are less likely to have coverage for such services. Unfortunately, we are unable to determine from the CCHS data whether individuals have extra coverage for alternative health care services (many of which are not covered by most provincial health care plans or are only partially covered by such plans). One possible indicator of this is the main source of income within the household.

- Those whose main source of household income came from earnings – whether earnings of the individual with a disability or another family member – were the most likely to have sought the services of alternative health care providers. There could be a variety of reasons for this finding. It may be related to age or education, or due to financial reasons. It is possible that those with employment income may be in a better financial position to pay for alternative health care services or that these individuals are more likely to have medical coverage for such services through their workplace.

Figure 8 **Consulted Alternative Health Care Provider over past 12 Months, by Main Source of Income, 2000/01**



Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

- We continue to see variations related to education levels when we examine patterns of alternative health care use among persons with or without disabilities who had similar sources of household income. For example, among those with employment income as the main source of household income, the pattern continues of increased use of alternative medicine as education level rises. This education pattern is also evident among those who have some type of transfer income as their main source of household income; it is just not quite as strong. It seems, therefore, that both employment income and education have an impact on determining whether an individual will seek alternative health care.

Figure 9 **Sought Alternative Health Care, by Income Source and Education Level, 2000/01**

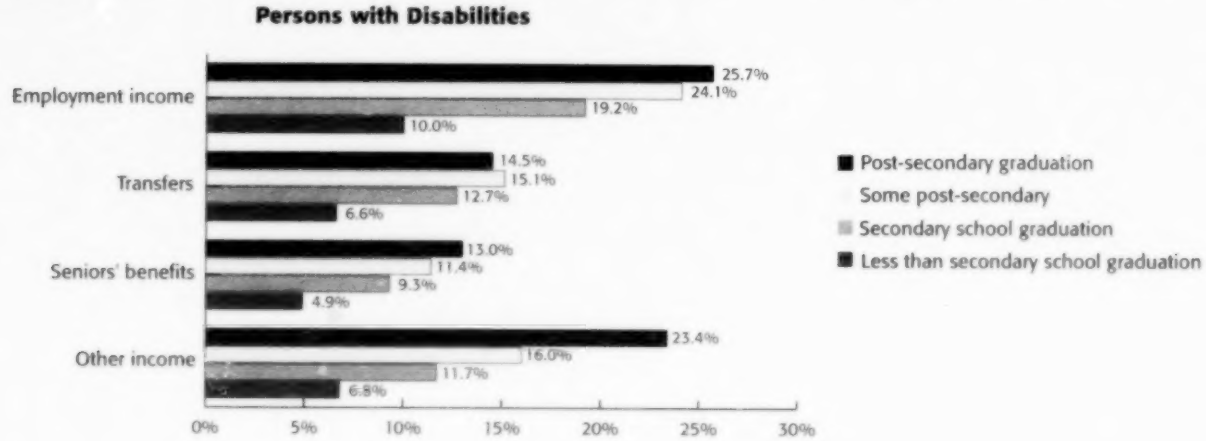
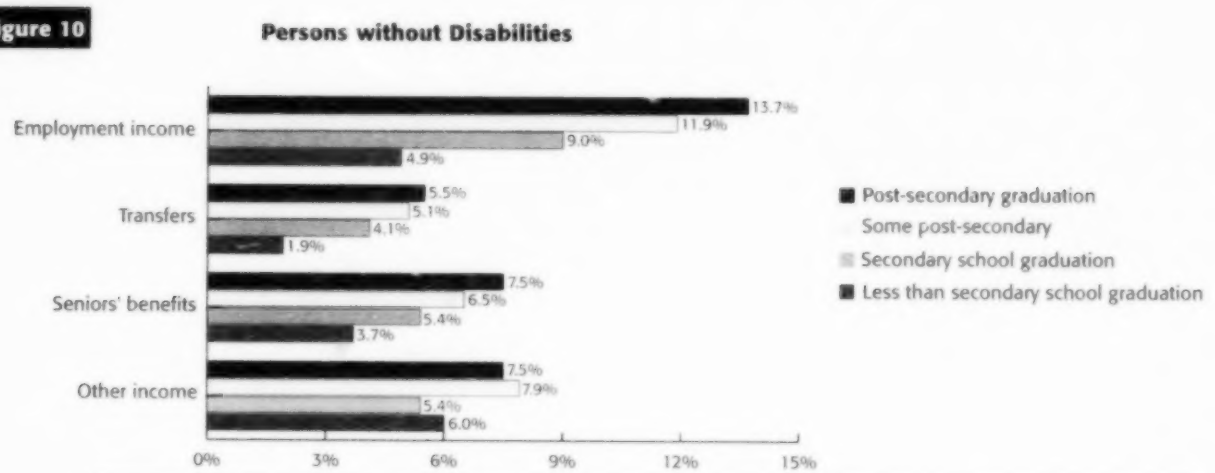


Figure 10



Source: Statistics Canada's *Canadian Community Health Survey*, 2000/01.

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Supplemental Table for CCSD's Disability Information Sheet #13:

Percentage of People with a Regular Medical Doctor, by Health Region, 2000/01

Province	Health Region	Persons with Disabilities	Persons without Disabilities
Newfoundland	Health comm services St. John's Region	97.5%	90.0%
Newfoundland	Health comm services Eastern Region	89.2%	81.7%
Newfoundland	Health comm services Central Region	88.7%	75.1%
Newfoundland	Western Grenfell and Labrador Region	82.3%	74.2%
Prince Edward Island	Urban Health Region	90.8%	89.0%
Prince Edward Island	Rural Health Region	96.4%	92.3%
Nova Scotia	Zone 1	96.2%	92.4%
Nova Scotia	Zone 2	93.3%	93.1%
Nova Scotia	Zone 3	94.5%	91.3%
Nova Scotia	Zone 4	94.5%	90.5%
Nova Scotia	Zone 5	96.4%	95.4%
Nova Scotia	Zone 6	95.6%	89.8%
New Brunswick	Region 1	94.3%	92.3%
New Brunswick	Region 2	93.3%	93.0%
New Brunswick	Region 3	96.1%	91.6%
New Brunswick	Region 4 and 5	94.7%	92.2%
New Brunswick	Region 6 and 7	96.1%	92.5%
Quebec	Region Du Bas St. Laurent	88.2%	79.3%
Quebec	Region Du Saguney - Lac Saint Jean	74.6%	60.5%>
Quebec	Region de Quebec	84.3%	72.9%
	Region de la Mauricie		

Quebec	Centre du Quebec	82.1%	70.1%
Quebec	Region de L'estrie	80.4%	65.7%
Quebec	Region de Montreal Centre	77.8%	60.3%
Quebec	Region de L'Outaouais	88.8%	79.4%
Quebec	Region de L'Abitibi-Temiscaminque	83.8%	75.0%
Quebec	Region de la Cote Nord	85.4%	63.7%
Quebec	Region de la Gaspesie Iles de la Madeleine	89.2%	79.3%
Quebec	Region de la Chaudiere Appalaches	89.4%	75.5%
Quebec	Region de Laval	86.7%	73.3%
Quebec	Region de Lanaudiere	81.9%	65.8%
Quebec	Region de Laurentides	85.7%	74.7%
Quebec	Region de la Monteregie	81.5%	71.6%
Ontario	Algoma Public Health Unit	89.5%	86.4%
Ontario	Brant Public Health Unit	95.4%	92.0%
Ontario	Durham Public Health Unit	95.7%	92.3%
Ontario	Elgin St. Thomas Public Health Unit	95.8%	96.4%
Ontario	Bruce Grey Owen Sound Public Health Unit	94.2%	94.1%
Ontario	Haldimand Norfolk Public Health Unit	96.4%	93.1%
Ontario	Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge	94.0%	94.9%
Ontario	Halton Public Health Unit	97.0%	92.3%
Ontario	Hamilton Wentworth Public Health Unit	96.2%	92.8%
Ontario	Hastings and Prince Edward PHU	94.0%	92.5%
Ontario	Huron and Perth Public Health Unit	97.4%	92.5%
Ontario	Kent Chatham Public Health Unit	92.3%	91.7%

Ontario	Kingston Frontenac Lennox Addington PHU	95.9%	92.2%
Ontario	Lambton Public Health Unit	93.1%	92.0%
Ontario	Leeds Grenville Lanark PHU	94.6%	91.6%
Ontario	Middlesex London Public Health Unit	91.8%	90.2%
Ontario	Muskoka Parry Sound Public Health Unit	94.7%	89.9%
Ontario	Niagara Public Health Unit	94.5%	91.9%
Ontario	North Bay and Timiskaming PHU	89.0%	87.1%
Ontario	Northwestern Public Health Unit	87.5%	77.5%
Ontario	Ottawa Carleton Public Health Unit	93.6%	85.5%
Ontario	Oxford Public Health Unit	97.3%	96.6%
Ontario	Peel Public Health Unit	95.3%	89.9%
Ontario	Peterborough Public Health Unit	93.2%	87.8%
Ontario	Porcupine Public Health Unit	92.0%	79.6%
Ontario	Renfrew Public Health Unit	96.9%	90.8%
Ontario	Eastern Ontario Public Health Unit	95.5%	87.6%
Ontario	Simcoe Public Health Unit	94.3%	91.2%
Ontario	Sudbury Public Health Unit	94.6%	91.8%
Ontario	Thunder Bay Public Health Unit	91.0%	84.9%
Ontario	Waterloo Public Health Unit	96.1%	89.2%
Ontario	Wellington Dufferin Public Health Unit	92.9%	89.4%
Ontario	Windsor Public Health Unit	90.7%	88.4%
Ontario	York Public Health Unit	94.7%	90.7%
Ontario	City of Toronto Public Health Unit	93.1%	87.6%

Manitoba	Winnipeg	90.1%	78.5%
Manitoba	Brandon, Marquette and South Westman	88.4%	77.9%
Manitoba	North and South Eastman	90.4%	76.0%
Manitoba	Interlake	86.7%	74.6%
Manitoba	Central	89.7%	81.4%
Manitoba	Parkland, Normand, Burntwood and Churchill	84.3%	75.8%
Saskatchewan	Weyburn (A), Moosejaw (B), Swift Current (C)	92.2%	79.7%
Saskatchewan	Regina (D) (Service Area)	90.5%	82.3%
Saskatchewan	Yorkton (E) and Melfort (H) Service Area	90.6%	80.1%
Saskatchewan	Saskatoon (F) Service Area	93.2%	80.7%
Saskatchewan	Rosetown (G) and North Battleford (J)	92.2%	80.7%
Saskatchewan	Prince Albert (I) North HLTH Serv BR (K)	85.2%	74.2%
Alberta	Chinook Regional Health Authority	93.0%	83.2%
Alberta	Palliser Regional Health Authority	90.7%	81.5%
Alberta	Headwaters Regional Health Authority and Health Authority #5	90.5%	80.7%
Alberta	Calgary Regional Health Authority	84.8%	75.9%
Alberta	David Thompson Regional Health Authority	88.2%	77.3%
Alberta	East Central Health Authority	81.4%	73.7%
Alberta	Westview and Crossroads Regional Health Authority	84.3%	75.6%
Alberta	Capital Health Authority	85.6%	75.0%
Alberta	Aspen Regional Health Authority	89.6%	78.5%
	Lakeland Regional Health		

Alberta	Authority	84.7%	76.0%
Alberta	Mistahia Regional Health Authority	93.5%	84.8%
Alberta	Peace/Keeweetinaok Lakes/N. Lights/N.West	82.6%	71.1%
British Columbia	East Kootenay	90.0%	81.9%
British Columbia	Kootenay/Boundary	90.4%	83.0%
British Columbia	Okanagan	94.5%	88.3%
British Columbia	Thompson/Cariboo	91.7%	85.0%
British Columbia	Fraser Valley	92.3%	88.1%
British Columbia	Simon Fraser	94.0%	87.0%
British Columbia	South Fraser	93.8%	86.3%
British Columbia	Richmond	92.3%	91.6%
British Columbia	Vancouver	89.6%	81.4%
British Columbia	North Shore/Coast Garibaldi	91.2%	89.6%
British Columbia	South Vancouver Island	93.0%	88.6%
British Columbia	Central/North Vancouver Island	95.5%	86.7%
British Columbia	Northwest/NorthEast	84.9%	79.7%
British Columbia	Northern Interior	95.4%	87.7%
YK/NWT/Nuv*	Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut	58.6%	46.0%

*Unfortunately, we were unable to generate separate statistics for the three Territories using the Public-Use file of the CCHS.

However on June 15, 2004, in an issue of The Daily, Statistics Canada published similar statistics for the general population within each of the Territories – although not by disability. These statistics indicate that there is quite a range across the Territories, with Nunavut (at 29.2%) having the lowest percentage of the general population with a regular medical doctor, and for the Northwest Territories, it was 47%. The Yukon Territory, at 81.5%, was still lower than most of the provinces (except Quebec) in terms of the percentage of its population with a regular medical doctor, but it was much higher than the other two Territories.

For more details on this issue, see The Daily at www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/040615/d040615b.htm

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